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Jonathan / Father

FATHER WARD'S LETTER TO PROFESSOR STUART.*

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The following letter was written to Professor Stuart, on his letter to Dr. Fisk, in which he teaches, that the *Bible* sanctions slavery, and which he allowed him to publish; if he "thought it would be of any service." It was written without the least idea of ever having it published. But some worthy and devoted ministers, who have seen it, expressed a wish that it might be given to the public.

Some may think it severe. I am totally opposed to all harshness and undue severity. But the honor of God and of the Bible, is infinitely more important than the honor of any man. And when men of high standing in the church, and extensive influence, attempt to support from the Bible a system of flagrant injustice and wickedness, it seems to be proper to "rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and *commandments of men*, that turn from the truth." There is at this day a sad giving "heed to the commandments of men" which support slavery, and which leads many professors and ministers to regard the laws of man as more binding than the laws of God, and to support a system whose laws forbid men to learn, or to be taught, to read *God's laws*, and his blessed word.

Newburyport 1837

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REVEREND SIR,

It is with reluctance that I take my pen to address you. And perhaps you may think it unbecoming in an obscure minister to address one so high in official standing, and especially to call in question his expositions of the sacred oracles, and his assumed positions. But when a person promulgates sentiments, and gives them to the public, they are public property, and every one has a right to animadvert upon them.

I recently met with your letter to Dr. Fisk, in which you make the Bible, and the God of the Bible, sanction the awful sin of Slavery, and which I read with surprise and grief. And as I am fully persuaded you have greatly "reproached your Maker," I feel constrained to "speak on God's behalf," and vindicate his glorious name and blessed book from the foul reproach of sanctioning that system, which withholds the Bible from immortal beings, and degrades them to the condition of beasts of burden, and mere property. For your letter will be quoted by slave-holders, and the supporters of slavery, as authority to prove, that the Bible, which condemns all kinds of injustice and oppression, does nevertheless sanction American Slavery with all its abominations. And of what "service" did you think its publication would be, except to serve the cause of slavery? Could you think it would be "doing *God* service?" If any have in a very small degree that spirit which led Elijah to say, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts," it seems as though they must be deeply affected to see Ministers and Theological Professors, bringing his sacred good old book to authorize the making "merchandize of the souls of men," and that they must feel something of the indignation which Christ expressed, when the ancient ministers of the sanctuary "made his house a house of merchandise." But which is the worst, to make the material temple "a house of merchandise," by selling sacrifices in it, or to make mer-

chandise of God's spiritual temple, and to attempt to justify, by his own authority, the selling of those "for whom Christ died," and even those who "are the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

But you admit that "the theory of slavery is not in itself right," and is contrary to the commands, Matt 22: 39, and 7: 12, and yet say it is not *malum in se* (an evil in itself.) Do you mean that it is not *morally right*, nor *morally wrong*? But "the abuse of it," you say, "is the essential and fundamental wrong." This has always been the plea of rum-makers, rum-venders, and rum-drinkers, and their apologists, the opposers of thorough temperance movements. But I should like to know what that slavery is, the *abuse* of which only is a sin. And what is that christianity which will destroy what it sanctions? For you say, "Paul knew well that christianity would ultimately destroy slavery." It is according to modern divines and theological professors, supported by the example of patriarchs and primitive christians, and the authority of Christ and his apostles, and of God himself, and yet christianity will destroy it! Christianity must certainly have a wonderful power to *destroy* what is *supported* by its own authority. Perhaps you will allege, that it only sanctions *slavery*, but not the *abuse* of it. You however say it will destroy slavery itself. And therefore it will *destroy* what it *sanctions and supports*. And you say "slaves were property in Greece and Rome. The power of the master over the slave was, for a long time, that of *life and death*. Horrible cruelties at length mitigated it. In the Apostle's day, it was at least, as great as among us." And yet this is the very slavery which you suppose the Apostle sanctioned! The holy Apostle and the Holy Ghost sanctioning a system of injustice and cruelty!

As well might you prove that he sanctioned Nero's tyranny and cruelty. "The manner in which the duty of servants or slaves is inculcated," says Dr. Wayland, "affords no ground for the assertion that it authorizes

one man to hold another in bondage, any more than the command to honor the king, when that king was Nero, authorized the tyranny of the emperor." But perhaps you agree with Dr. Fisk and his Methodist brethren in their "Counter Appeal," that 'Christianity sustained the fabric (of Nero's despotism),' 'it forbade the attempt at revolution.'

Does your letter however contain any *proof* to sustain your assertions? Or do they rest on mere assumptions? You take it for granted, that servants, 1 Tim. 6: 1, must mean *slaves*. For, if Paul included *hired* servants, then your foundation entirely fails. And now what proof have you adduced, that he did not include them? None. And, to sustain yourself, you must prove, either that there were no *hired* servants, or else that *doulos* always means a *slave*; both of which may be abundantly *disproved*. Paul says, "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, (*doulou*,) though he be lord of all." You will not, I presume, contend that the child "though heir and lord of all, differeth nothing" from a *bond servant* or *slave*, and is held by his father as mere *property*. Paul calls himself the servant of Jesus Christ. Did he mean to teach that he was the *slave* of Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ was a *slave holder*? Those whom he "makes free are free indeed." Christians are called (*douloi*) servants of God, more than twenty times in the New Testament. And Paul styles himself and other ministers, the servants of christians. 1 Cor. 9: 19. 2 Cor. 4: 5. Did he mean their *slaves*? And he commanded them not to be the servants of men.—You will not surely say he meant *slaves*, as it would overthrow your scheme, because it would make him *forbid* them to be *slaves*. "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, (*doulos*) *slave*!

But you will probably say, that *yoke* means the *yoke of slavery*. But how do you know? It does not mean so in any other place in the New Testament. And it would be rather singular logic to say, *therefore* it

must mean so here. "Take my *yoke* upon you, for my *yoke is easy*." This is a *voluntary* and *easy* service, '*taken*' *voluntarily*. The ritual service, which is called a *yoke*, was voluntary. Acts 15 : 10. Gal. 5 : 1. See 2 Cor. 6 : 14. Phil. 4 : 3. Though Paul has given directions to different members of families, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants,—yet, according to your unreasonable supposition, there is one class, to wit, *hired* servants, whom he entirely overlooked. I would therefore read 1 Tim. 6 : 12. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke of voluntary or bond service, &c." "And those voluntary, or hired servants that have believing masters, &c." And this will entirely free the Apostle from the shocking imputation of sanctioning Grecian slavery, and the primitive christians from the charge of countenancing and supporting it, by their own example, and holding their fellow christians as *their property*.

You are very confident, that Onesimus was the *slave* of Philemon, and that "Paul sent him back" into perpetual slavery, to be held in bondage by a *Christian*, and as his *property*, in violation of the great law of love, as you seem to admit, in referring to that law! But where is your *proof*? As Onesimus seems to have run away in *debt*, it appears much more rational to suppose, that he was a hired servant, and that he had been paid in advance, or had borrowed money of Philemon. And in that case it would be highly proper for Paul to send him back. But he directed Philemon to "receive him *not* as a (common hired) servant, but *above* a servant," and to treat him as "a beloved (*christian*) brother." It is astonishing to me, that you should adduce this admirable letter to justify *Christian slave holding*. And no one, I think, would have done it, except to apologize for slave holding ministers and professors.

You seem to take it for granted, that we have in Paul's epistles, all the instructions, which he gave the churches on slavery; that he did not condemn it, and

that he would have condemned it, had it been "*malum in se*," (an evil in itself.) But did he, in his epistles, condemn every sinful practice, as theatres, gladiatory shows, &c. or were not these "*mala in se*?" He directed "masters to give unto their servants that which is *just* and *equal*." Is it *just* and *equal* to deprive men of their liberty, and all their rights, and earnings, and to hold them and buy and sell them, as mere property? And would they, in obedience to this apostolical injunction, do it? I wish you to allow your conscience to answer this last question, as in the presence of God, and in view of the judgment. If you say they could, you have strange notions of justice.

I could quote a multitude of great, learned, and good men, (not modern abolitionists) in contradiction of your views of slavery, and of the Bible in relation to it, from which you would perceive, that there has been much "*spouting*," (how elegant,) before the recent "*spouting* and vehemence" of the abolitionists. But I shall content myself with a few brief extracts and references. Columba, the apostle of Scotland, who died A. D. 597, "considered slavery wholly inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. He abhorred it so much, that he refused to give medicine to a sick man, till he would set his slave at liberty. He set his face so much against slavery, that it never prevailed in the Highlands afterwards." (LIFE OF COLUMBA.)

Baxter declared that, "they who buy negroes, and use them for their own convenience, are fitter to be called demons than christians." Patrick Henry said, "It (slavery) is as repugnant to humanity, as it is *inconsistent* with the Bible, and destructive to liberty." Wm. Pickney of Maryland said, "Its continuance is as shameful as its origin."

Rev. Mr. Rice, a member of the Convention which formed the State Constitution of Kentucky, urged the immediate abolition of Slavery. He contested, that freedom is "the right" of the slave, and that it was worse to deprive him of his liberty, than "to rob

a person of his property," and said, "the master may, and often does, inflict upon the slave all the severity of punishment the human body is capable of bearing; and the law supports him in it; none can hear and relieve him; he has no redress under heaven." Dr. Jonathan Edwards, in a sermon preached in 1791, says, "to hold a slave, who has a right to his liberty, is not only a real *crime*, but a *very great one*. To steal a man or rob him of his liberty is a greater *sin*, than to *steal* his property, or take it by *violence*. And to hold a man in a state of slavery, who has a right to his liberty, is to be *every day* guilty of robbing him of his liberty, or of *manstealing*. The consequence is *inevitable*, that other things being the same, to hold a negro slave is a greater *sin* in the *sight of God* than fornication, theft or robbery." And yet you think it is *no sin*, (*malum in se.*) He was so "fanatical" as to hold that "slaveholders ought *immediately* to let their slaves go free, treat them with the utmost kindness, &c." And he thought," within fifty years, it will be as shameful for a man to hold a negro slave, as to be guilty of robbery or theft." And will it then be an honor to have apologized for, or defended it?

The venerable Congress of '76 declared, that it is "self-evident," that "*all men* have an inalienable right to *liberty*." And yet you suppose Paul taught that this *self evident* proposition is *false*. In 1818 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church *unanimously* adopted a report on slavery, in which they say, "we consider the voluntary enslaving of one part of the human race by another, as a *gross violation* of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, as *utterly inconsistent* with the *law of God*, which requires us to "love others as ourselves," and as *totally irreconcilable* with the *spirit and principles* of the gospel, which enjoins, that "all things whatsoever we would that others should do unto us, we should do unto them." It is *manifestly* the *duty of all* Christians who enjoy the light of the present day, when the *inconsistency* of



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